KEEP
LEFT | RIGHT

TRAIL RELATED ISSUES IN INDIANA

There are many issues surrounding trails that both users and managers must face when it comes to using, developing and maintaining trails in Indiana. Depending on the point of view, the issues fall into 5 general categories: economics, development, safety, management and liability.

Trail providers, trail neighbors and trail users all are stakeholders in the success or failure of any trail project. Some issues are dealt with on the trail. Other issues must be addressed through larger, broader based strategies implemented by trail managing entities and at various levels of government.

Trail providers are concerned about funding, developing and managing trails. Trail management entails resolving user conflicts, developing a maintenance plan and working with trail user groups to keep the trails in peak condition. Trail users are concerned with locating and accessing trails suitable to their chosen activity. Interactions with other trail users, trail conditions and appropriate trail amenities are more examples of issues that concern trail users.
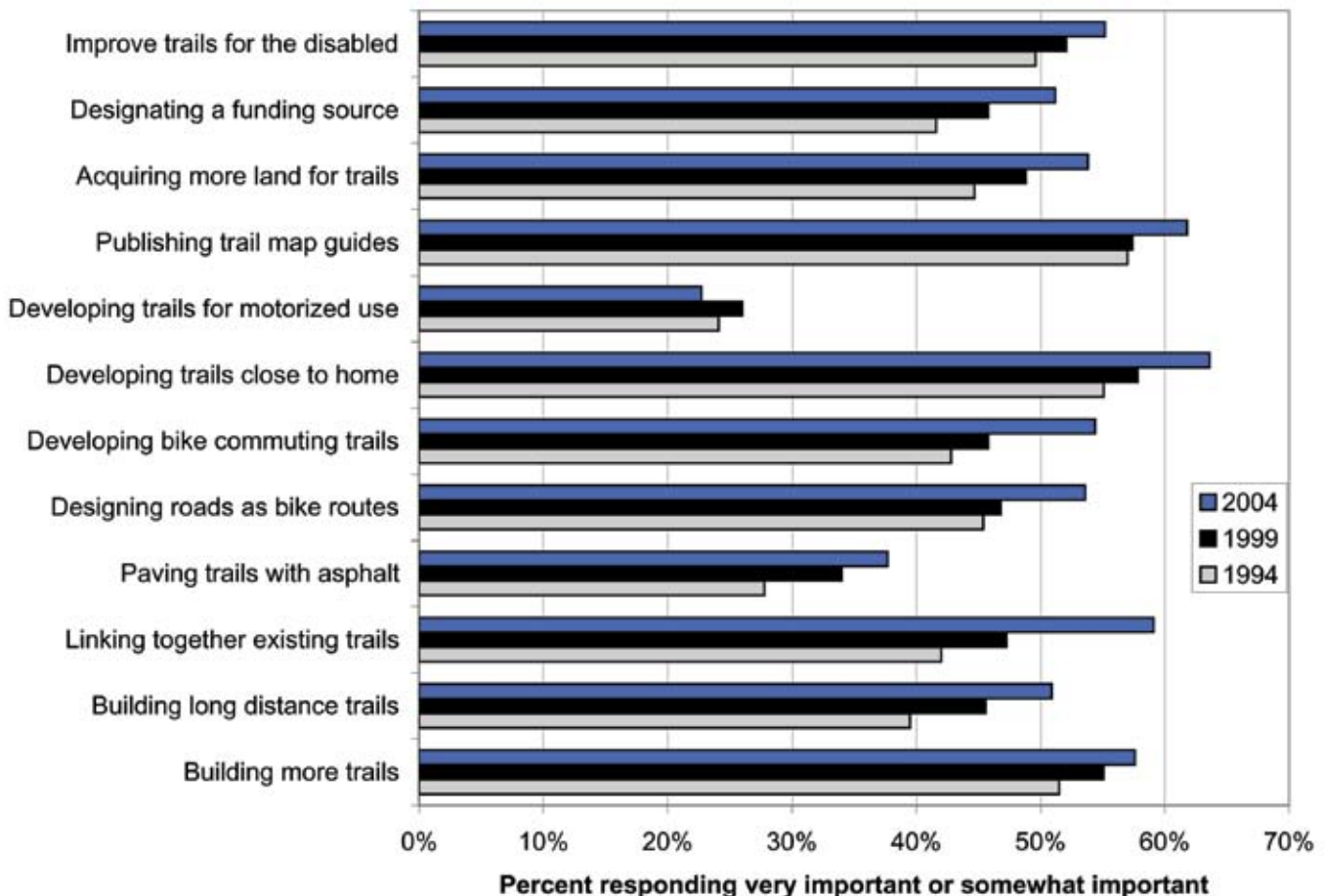
Trail neighbors are often the most vocal in calling for their issues to be addressed. Impact on local communities and land values, safety and trail management often concern people who live next door to a trail. An open approach and careful attention to detail throughout a given trail project from start to finish will satisfy the concerns of those lucky few who have the opportunity to have a trail for a neighbor.

By working together, the combined forces of local, state and federal governments with private interest can provide solutions to the issues that affect trails in Indiana. This public-private partnership approach will ultimately provide a comprehensive trail network in Indiana.

TRAILS MANAGEMENT ISSUES SURVEY

The purpose of the Trails Management Issues Study was to identify current trail management issues that relate to the availability and use of trails; the availability of trail information; the planning and development of trails; trail design; funding for trail maintenance and develop-

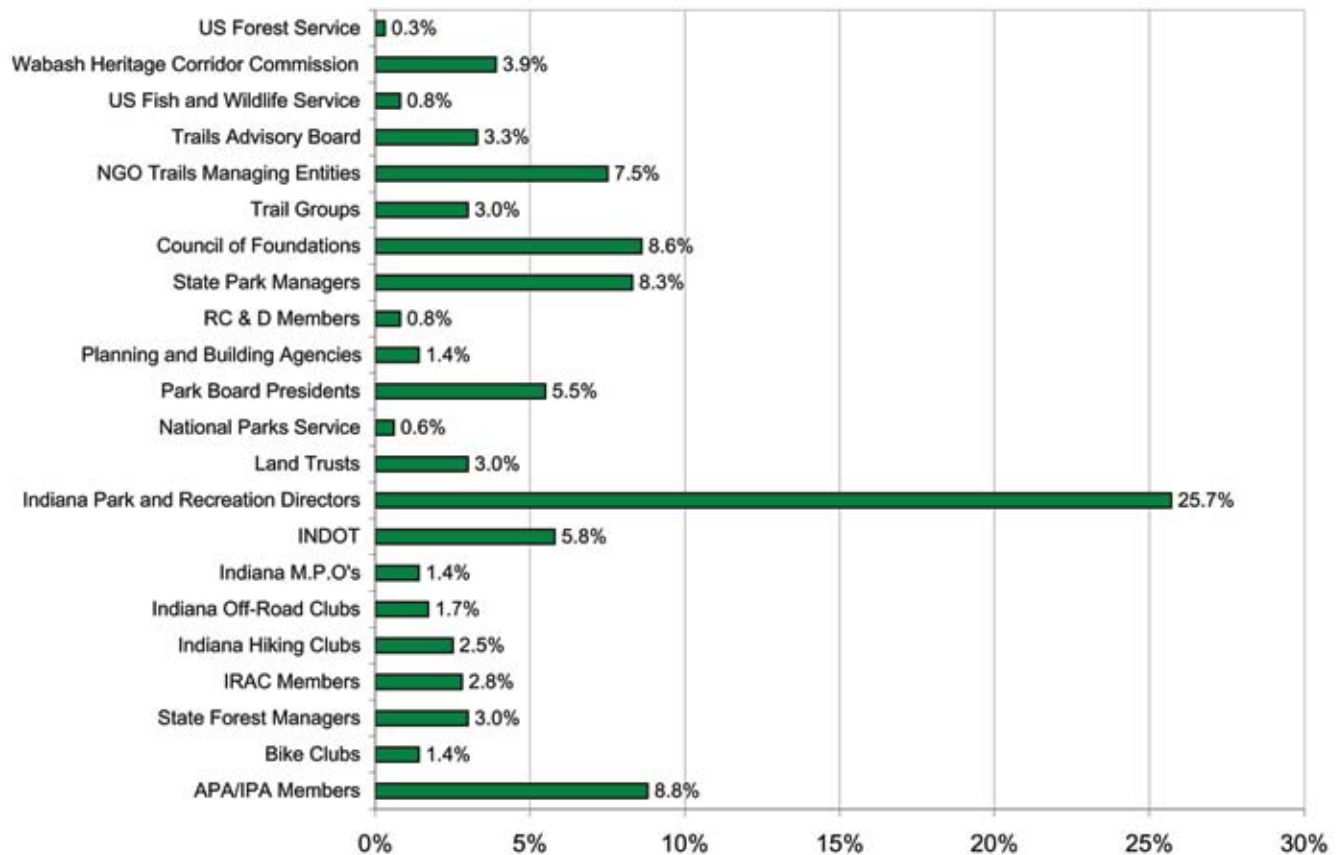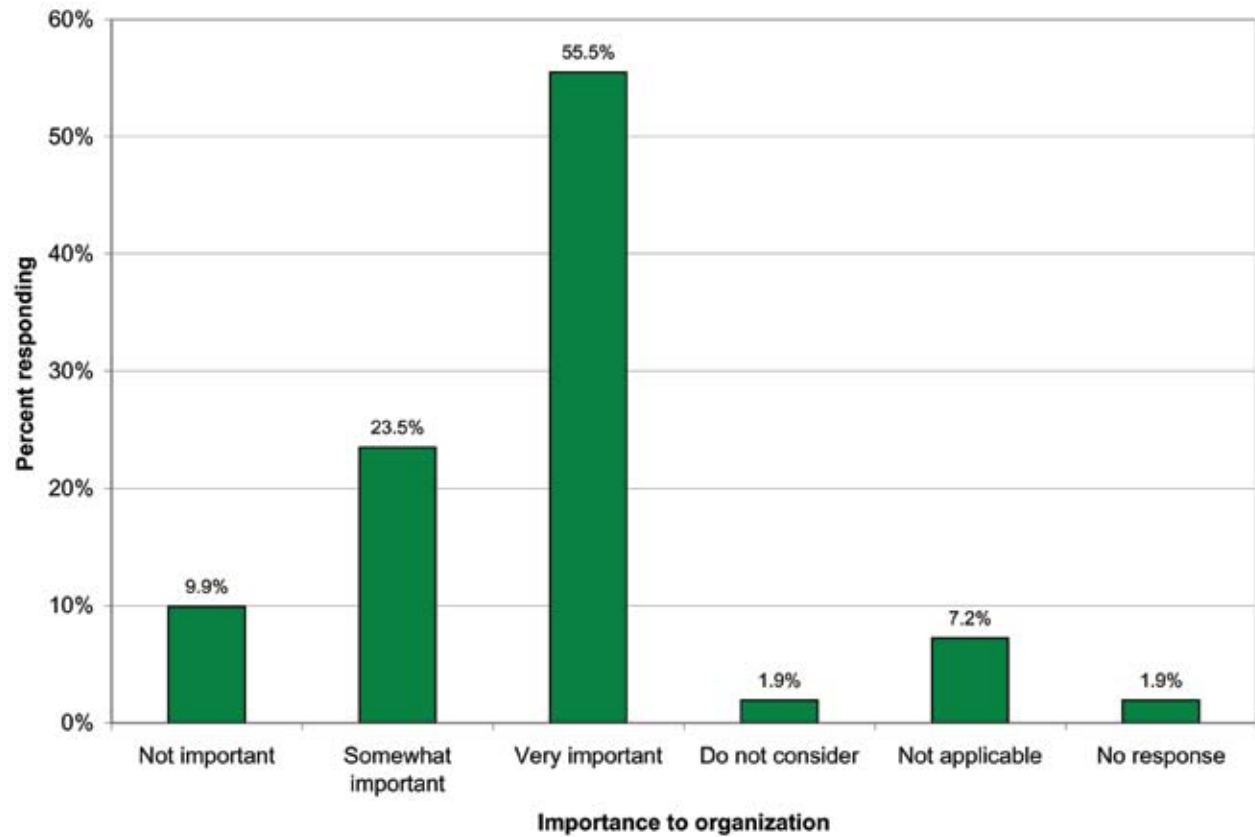## How important do you feel the following trail issues are?

Percent responding very important or somewhat important

Entities responding to the Indiana Trails Management Issues survey

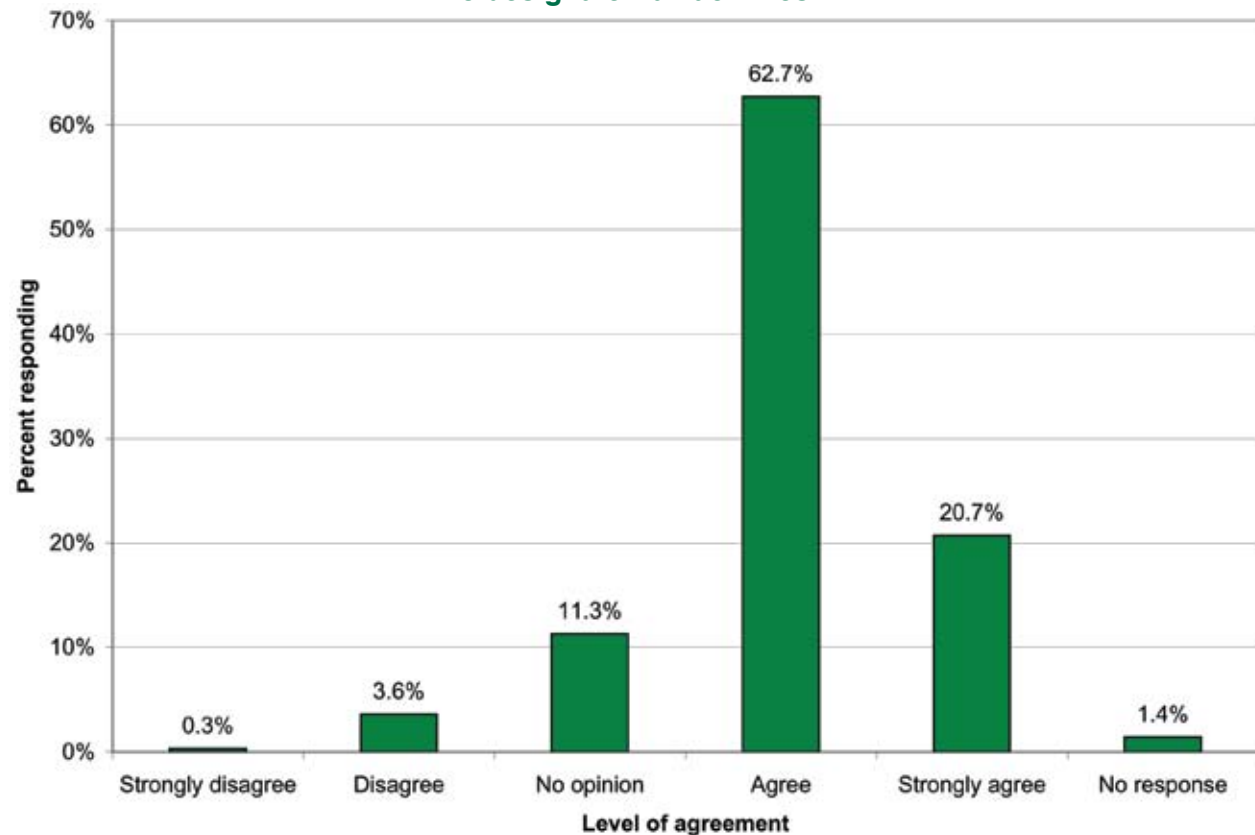| Entity	Percentage
US Forest Service	0.3%
Wabash Heritage Corridor Commission	3.9%
US Fish and Wildlife Service	0.8%
Trails Advisory Board	3.3%
NGO Trails Managing Entities	7.5%
Trail Groups	3.0%
Council of Foundations	8.6%
State Park Managers	8.3%
RC & D Members	0.8%
Planning and Building Agencies	1.4%
Park Board Presidents	5.5%
National Parks Service	0.6%
Land Trusts	3.0%
Indiana Park and Recreation Directors	25.7%
INDOT	5.8%
Indiana M.P.O's	1.4%
Indiana Off-Road Clubs	1.7%
Indiana Hiking Clubs	2.5%
IRAC Members	2.8%
State Forest Managers	3.0%
Bike Clubs	1.4%
APA/IPA Members	8.8%

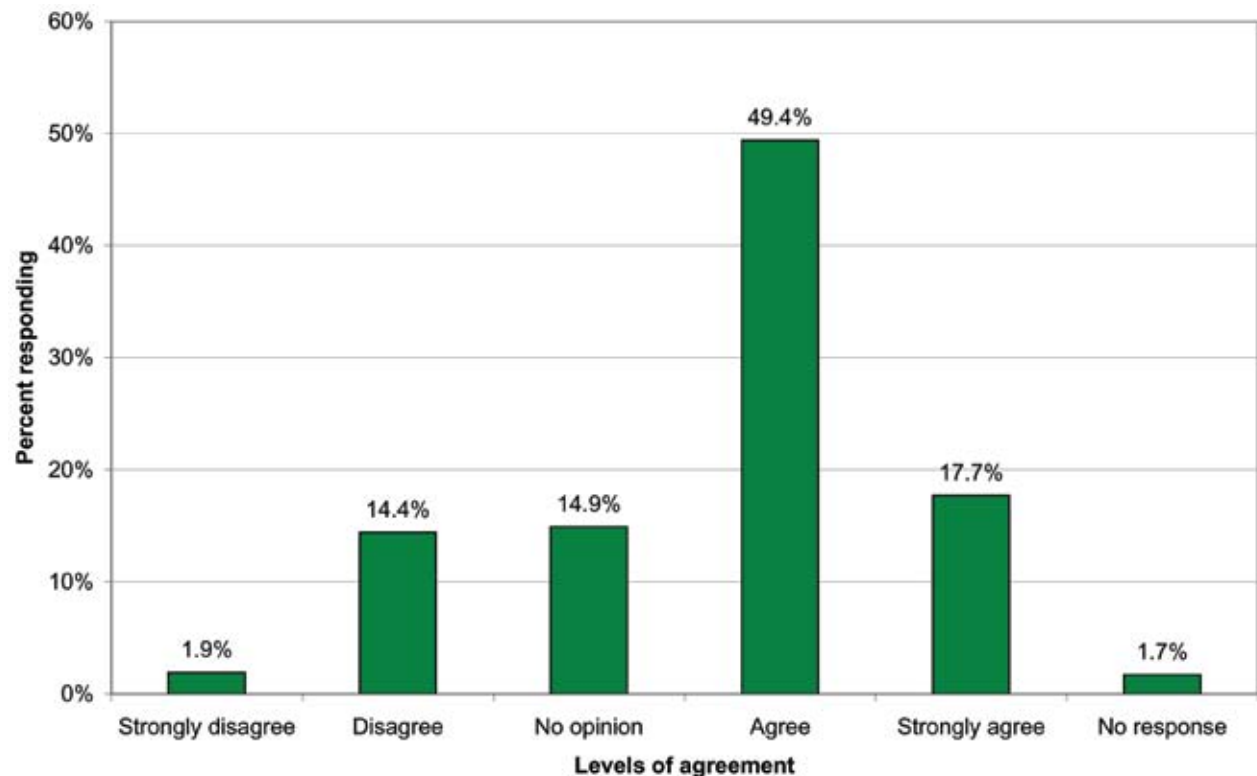**What is your organization's view toward land acquisition for trail development?**

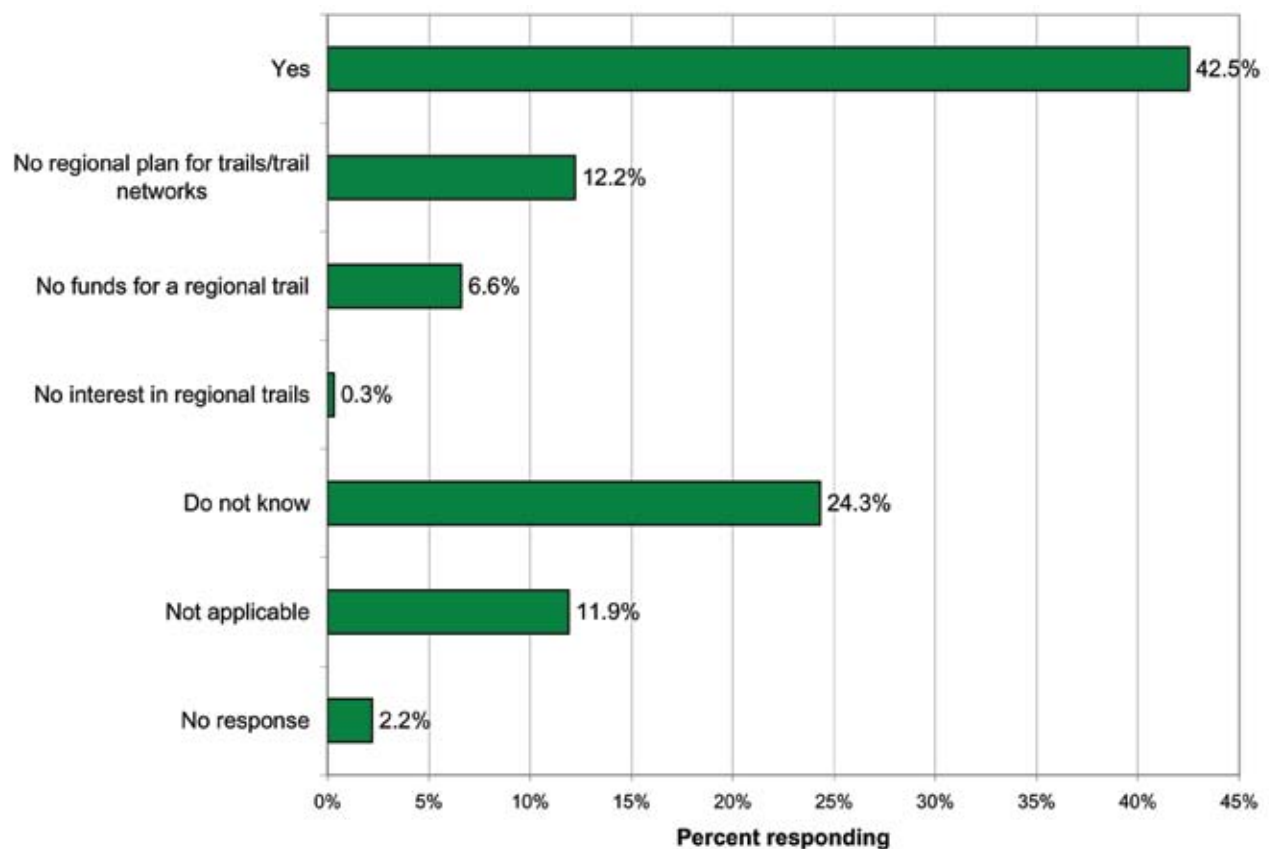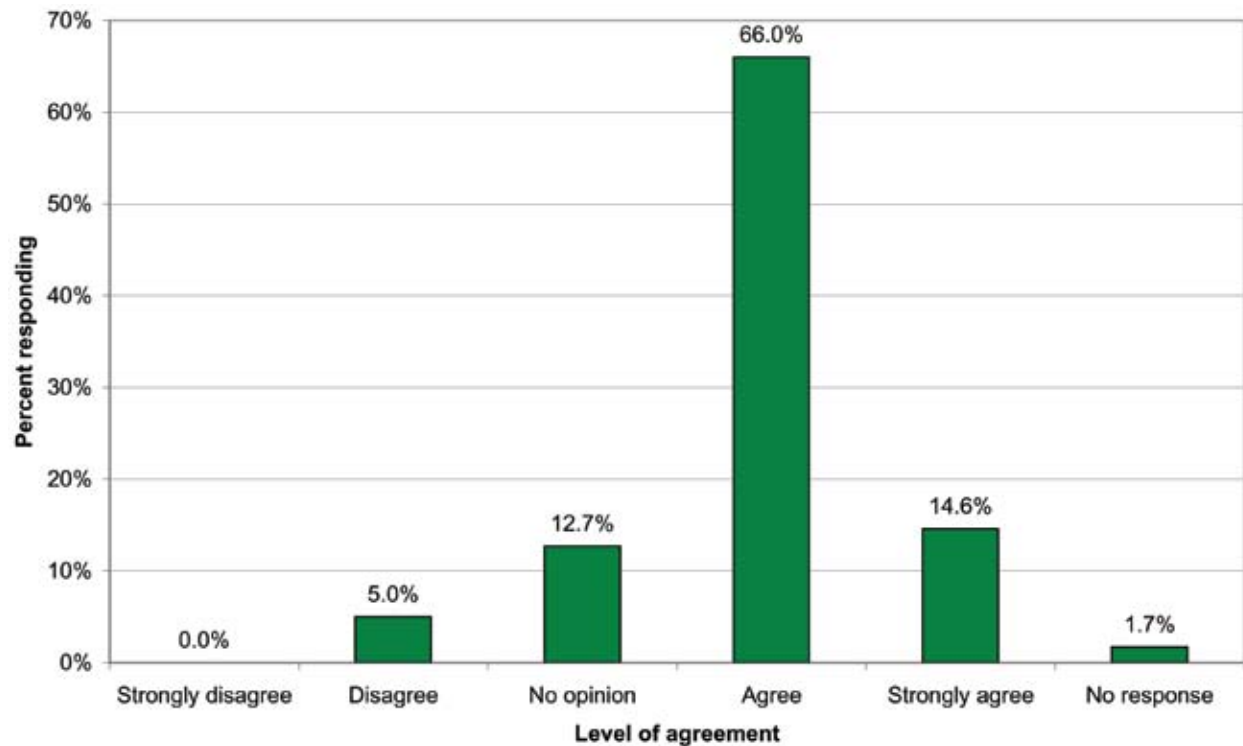**Standardized signs and symbols should be used throughout the state to designate trail activites**

## Trail developments and renovations must comply with the latest ADA accessibility standards.

Percent responding vs. Levels of agreement

- Strongly disagree: 1.9%
- Disagree: 14.4%
- No opinion: 14.9%
- Agree: 49.4%
- Strongly agree: 17.7%
- No response: 1.7%

Is your community included in a regional trails plan that includes connections to other communities?

Percent responding

- Yes: 42.5%
- No regional plan for trails/trail networks: 12.2%
- No funds for a regional trail: 6.6%
- No interest in regional trails: 0.3%
- Do not know: 24.3%
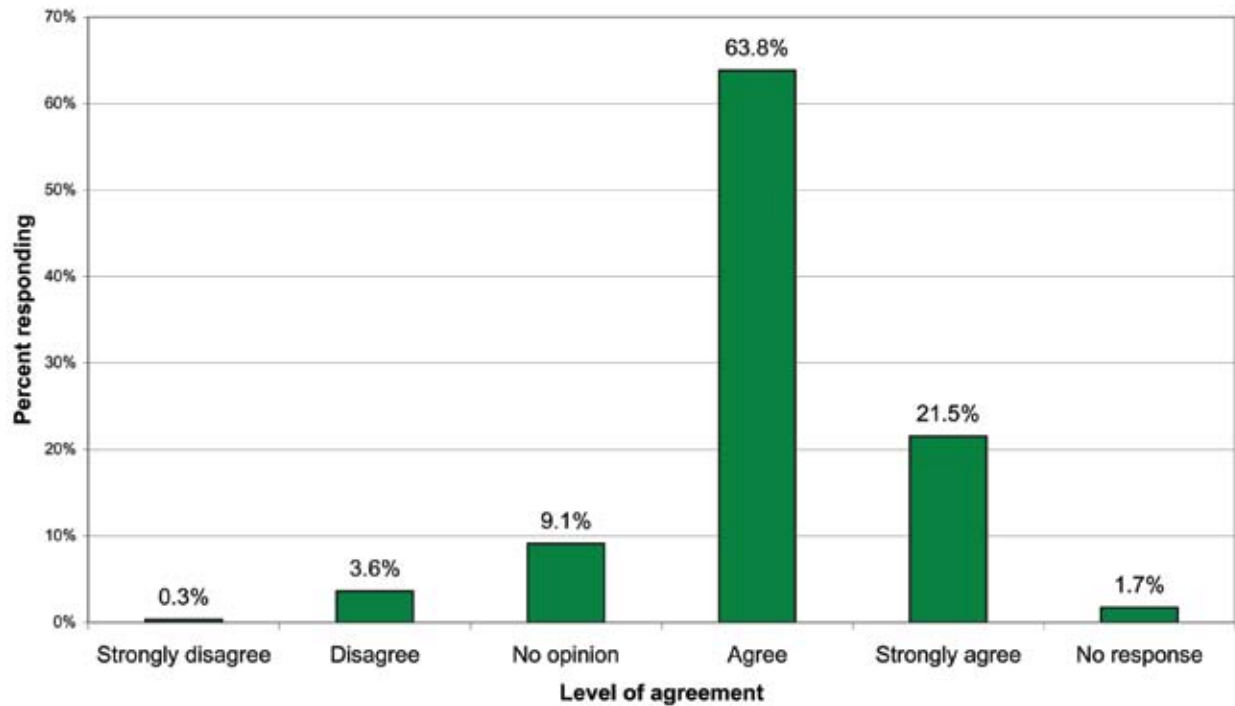- Not applicable: 11.9%
- No response: 2.2%

Interpretive signage along trails are important.

When planning and designing trails, do you try to connect community destinations such as schools, recreation facilities, commercial districts and cultural/historic sites?
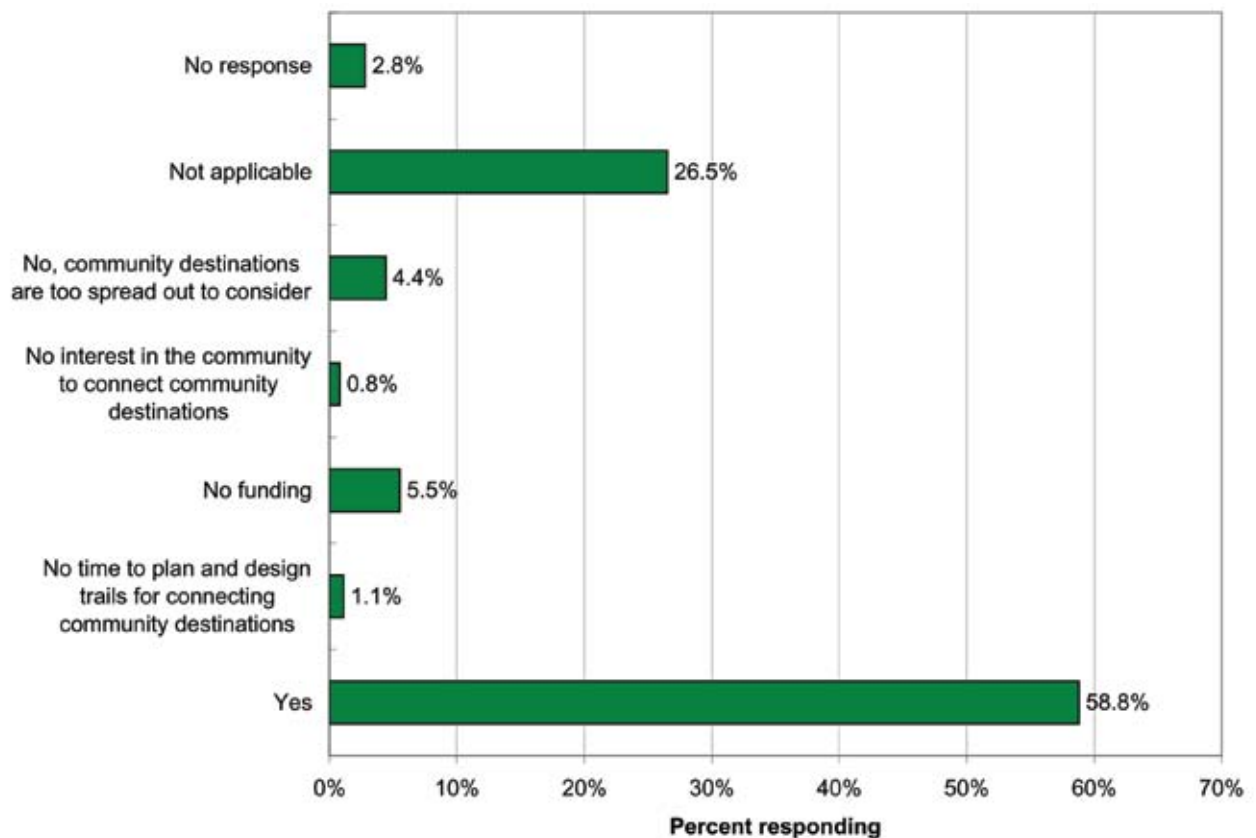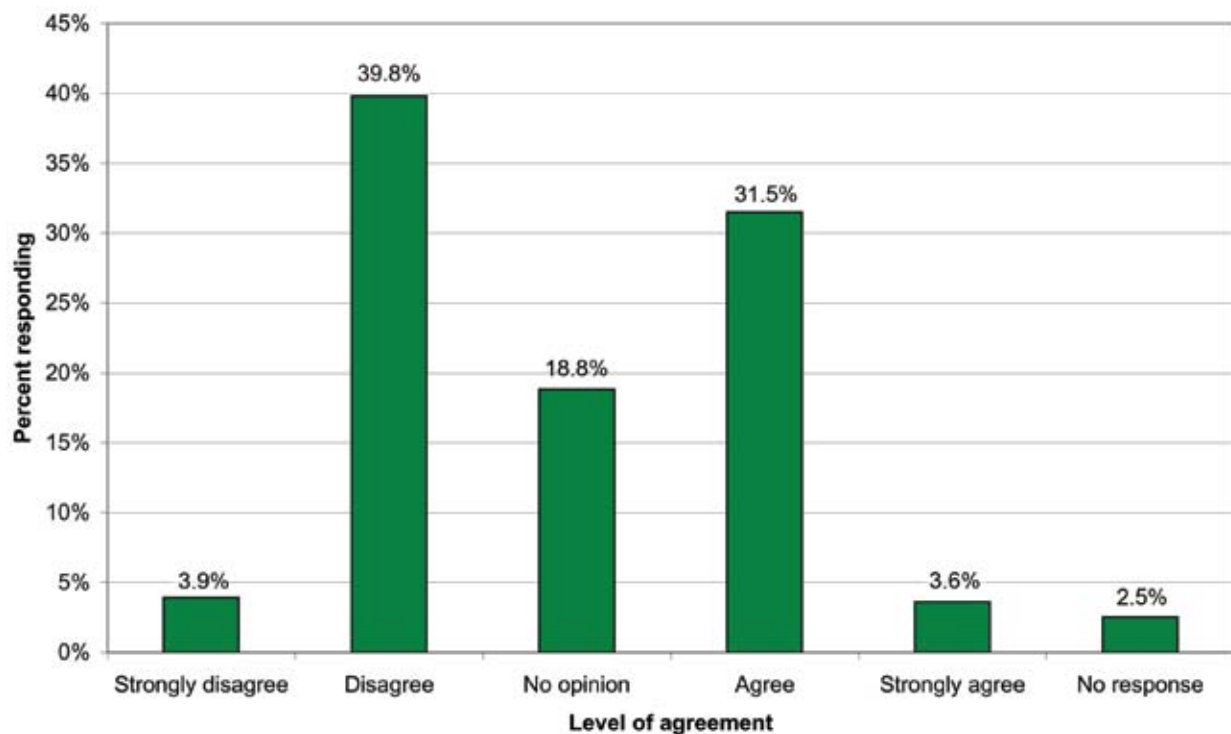
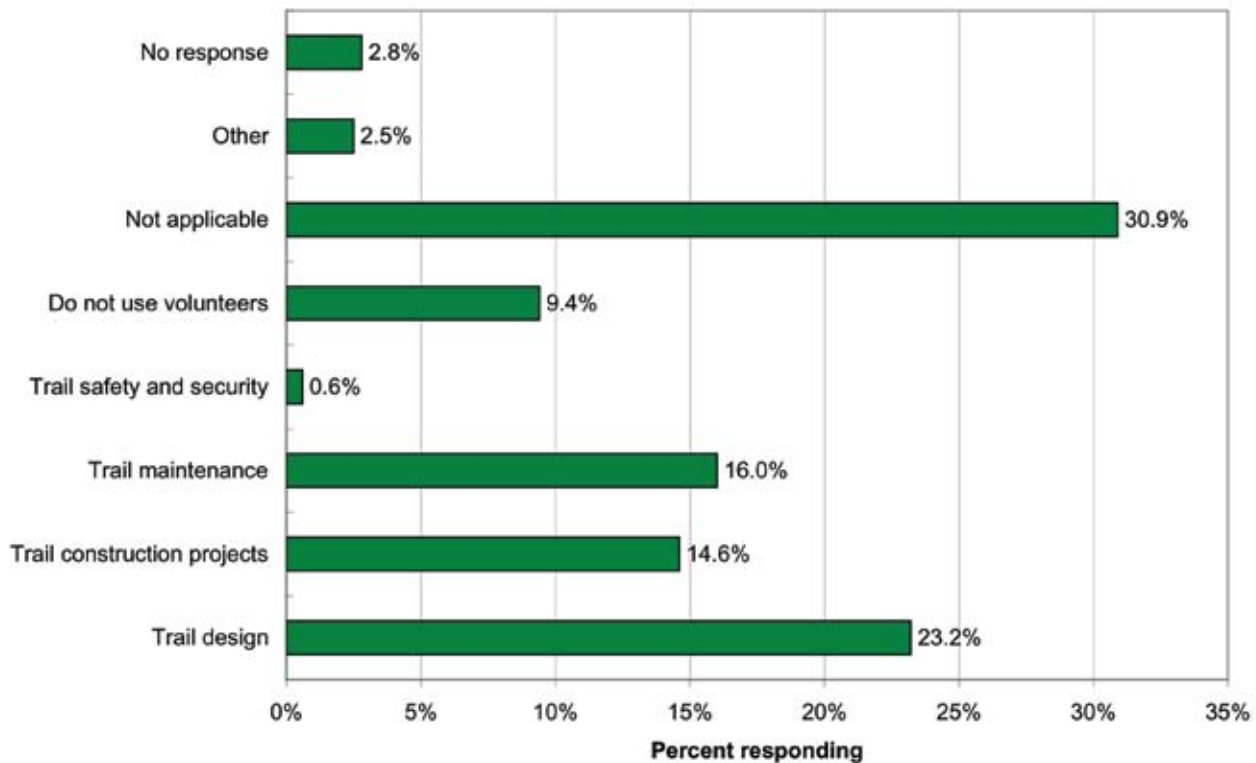## Adjoining landowners and businesses must be involved in planning for trail development.

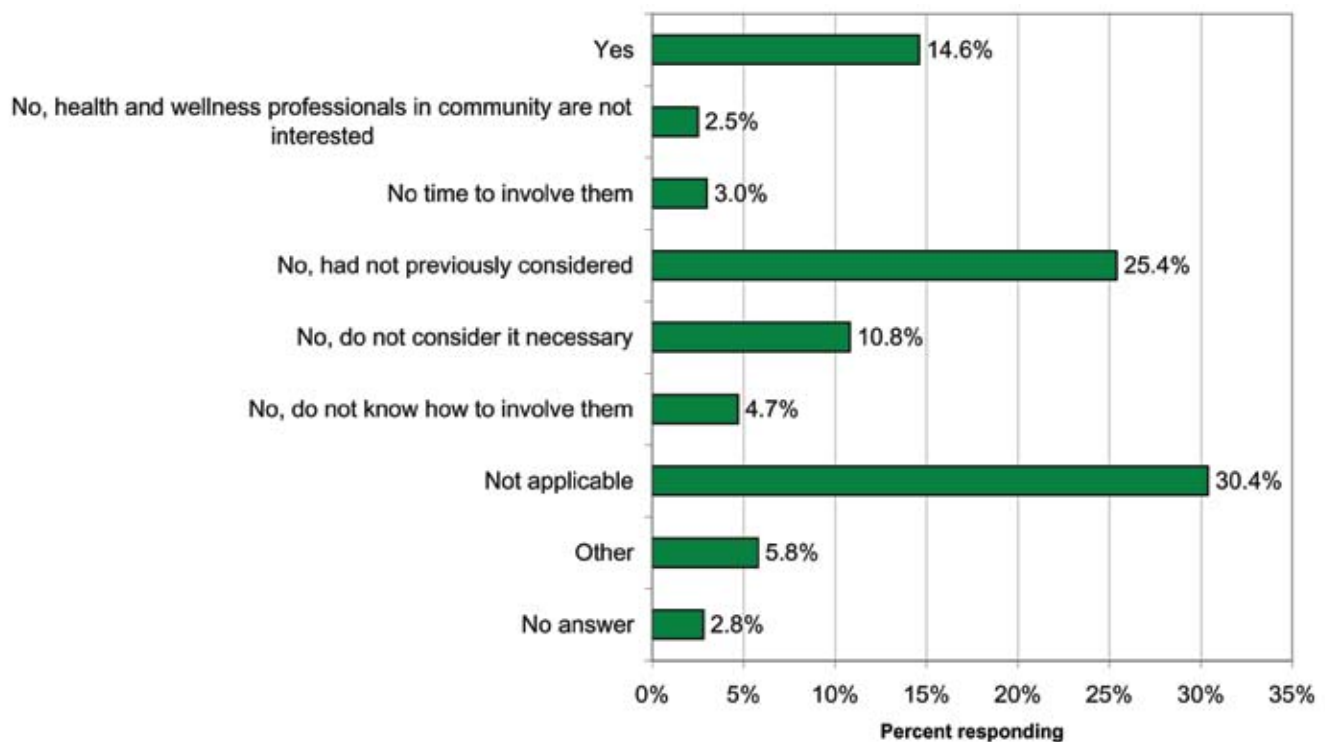## In terms of need for your service population, trail development is less important than other facility development.

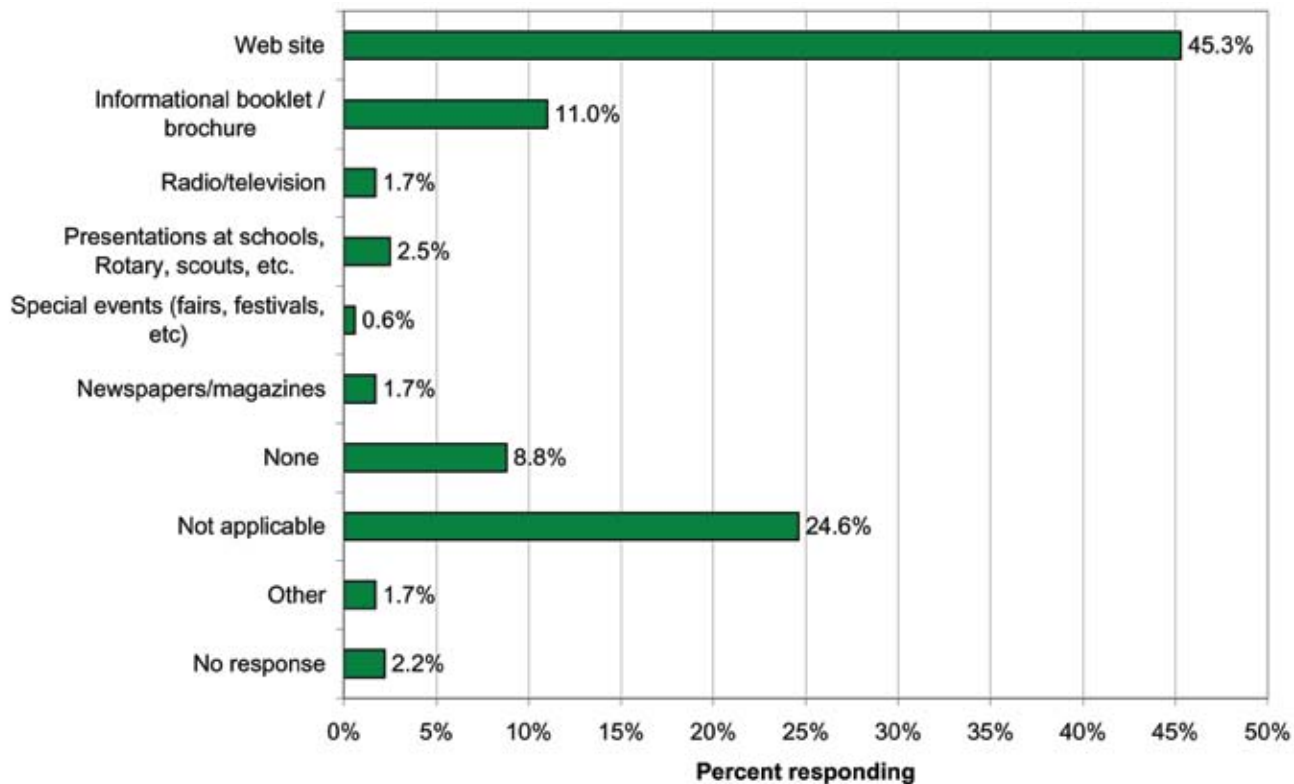## Do you use volunteers for any of the following activities?

Activity	Percent responding
No response	2.8%
Other	2.5%
Not applicable	30.9%
Do not use volunteers	9.4%
Trail safety and security	0.6%
Trail maintenance	16.0%
Trail construction projects	14.6%
Trail design	23.2%

Percent responding

Are health and wellness professionals closely involved in the planning of your trails?

Response	Percent responding
Yes	14.6%
No, health and wellness professionals in community are not interested	2.5%
No time to involve them	3.0%
No, had not previously considered	25.4%
No, do not consider it necessary	10.8%
No, do not know how to involve them	4.7%
Not applicable	30.4%
Other	5.8%
No answer	2.8%

Percent responding

What media do you use to promote your trail system?

Category	Percent responding
Web site	45.3%
Informational booklet / brochure	11.0%
Radio/television	1.7%
Presentations at schools, Rotary, scouts, etc.	2.5%
Special events (fairs, festivals, etc)	0.6%
Newspapers/magazines	1.7%
None	8.8%
Not applicable	24.6%
Other	1.7%
No response	2.2%

Percent responding

Does your organization coordinate with other agencies and organizations for trail system development and management?

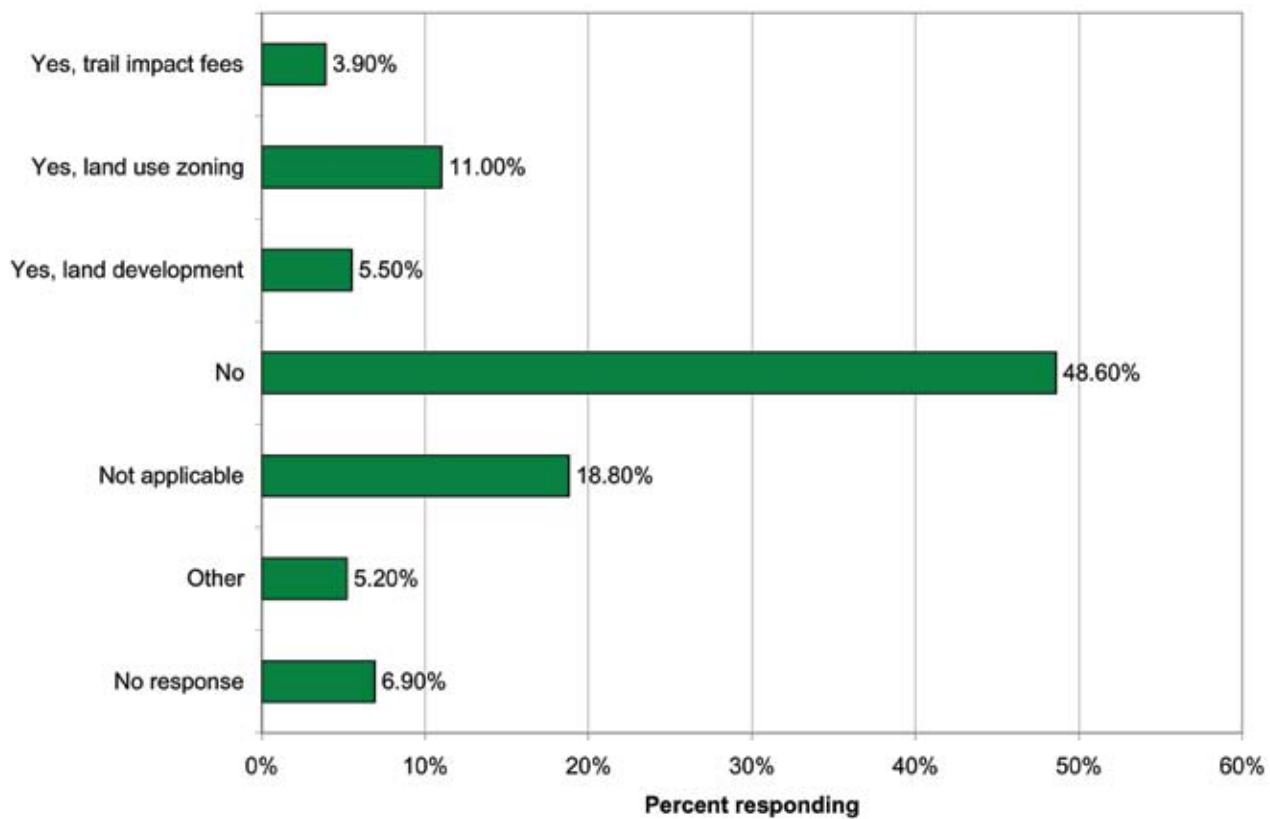| Category	Percent responding
State government	36.7%
City	17.1%
County	6.4%
Township	1.4%
Federal government	0.3%
Non-governmental organizations	3.3%
Do not coordinate with other agencies	9.9%
Not applicable	19.3%
Other	3.3%
No answer	2.2%

Percent responding
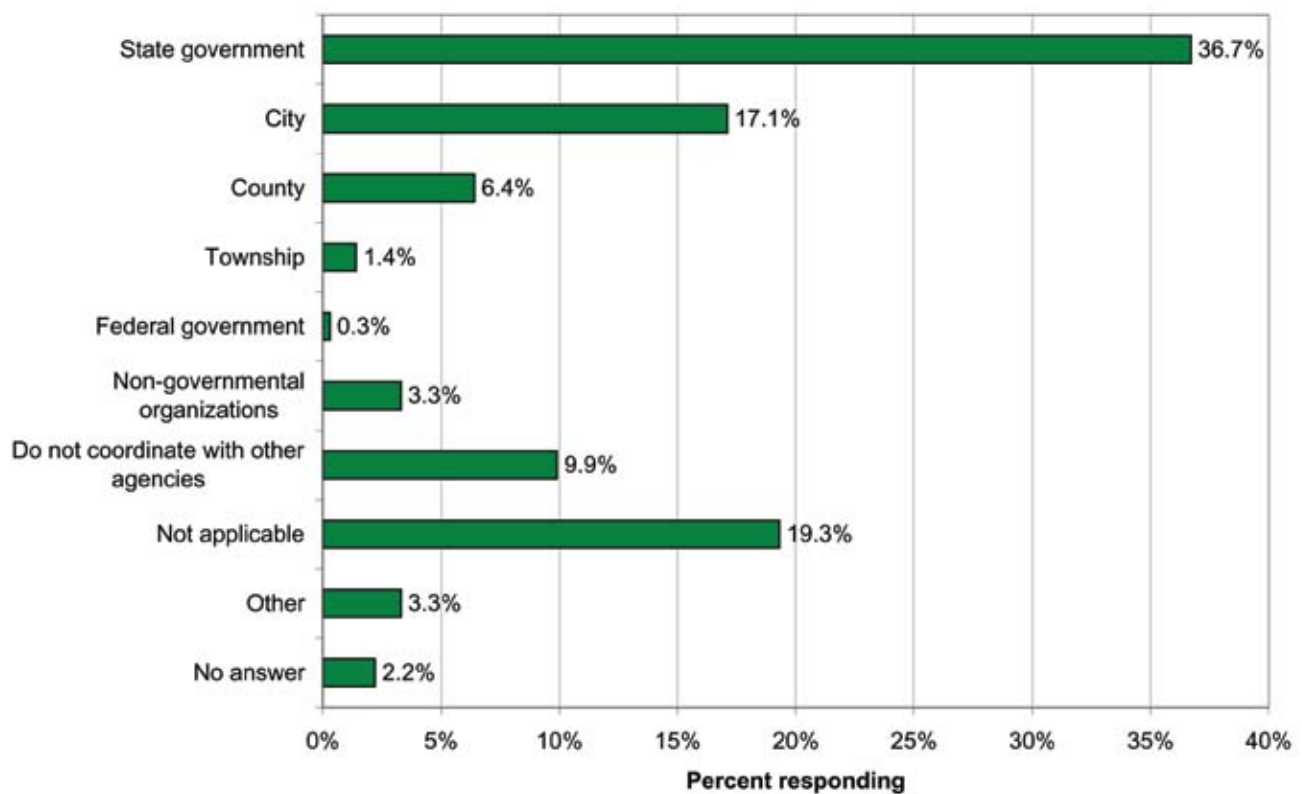
Do you provide information on the benefits of trail use?
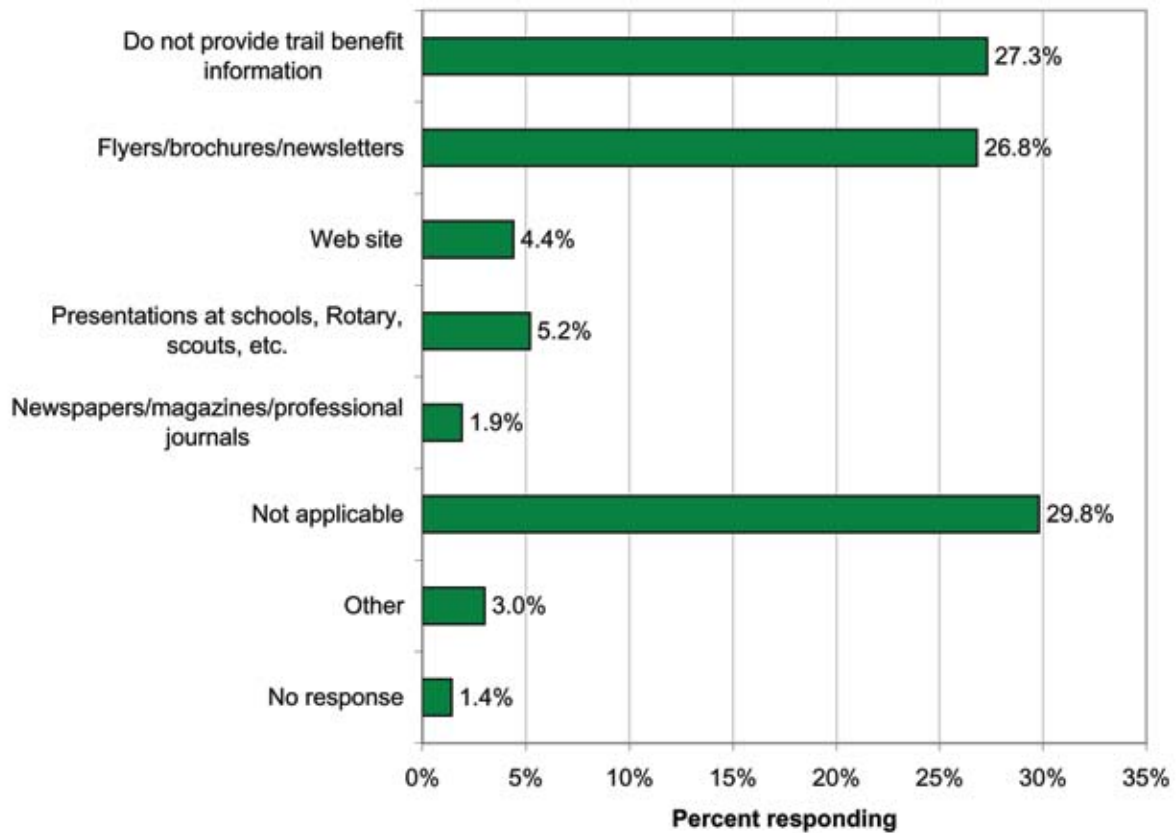
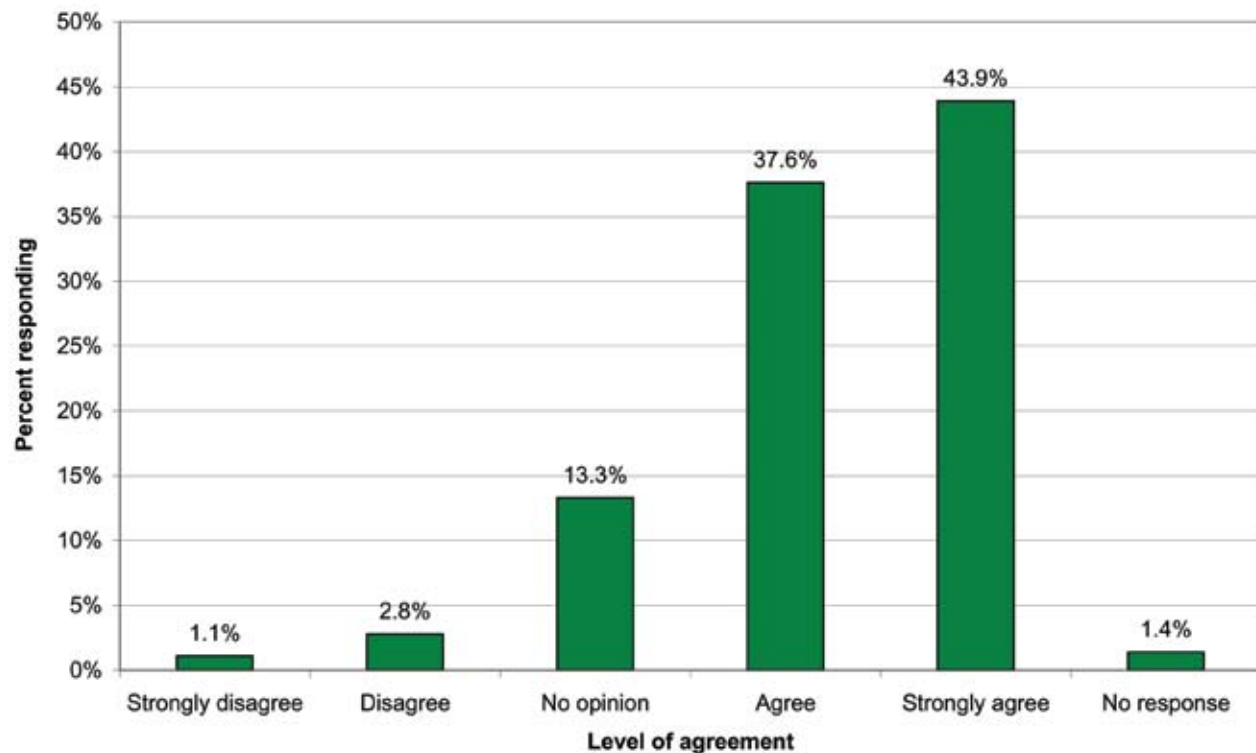**Do you feel legislative action will assist in the further development of multi-use trail networks?**
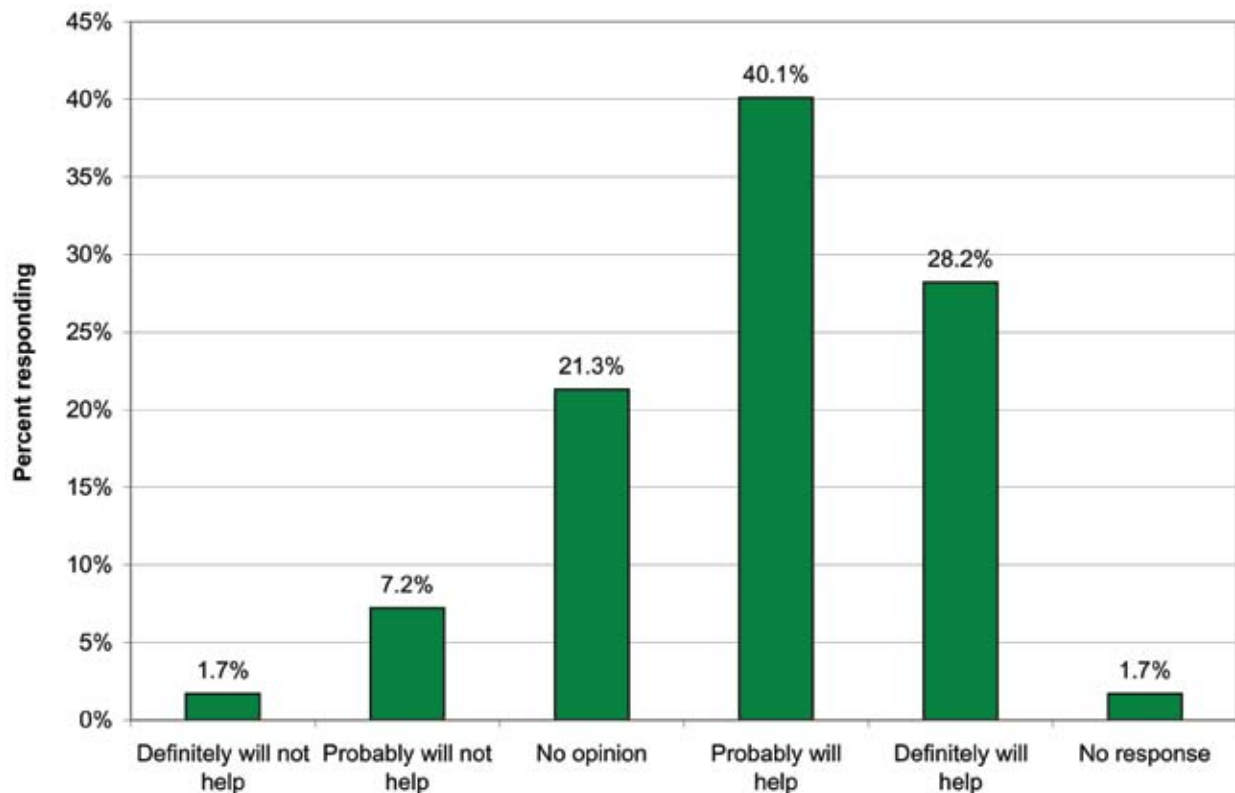
Does your community have ordinances and regulations that facilitate trail development?

| Category	Percent
Yes, trail impact fees	3.90%
Yes, land use zoning	11.00%
Yes, land development	5.50%
No	48.60%
Not applicable	18.80%
Other	5.20%
No response	6.90%

Percent responding

There should be state legislation that supports the acquisition of former railroad corridors for the development of trails.

| Level of agreement	Percent responding
Strongly disagree	1.1%
Disagree	2.8%
No opinion	13.3%
Agree	37.6%
Strongly agree	43.9%
No response	1.4%

Developing trails that serve high-density populations should be a higher priority than developing trails that serve less dense populations.
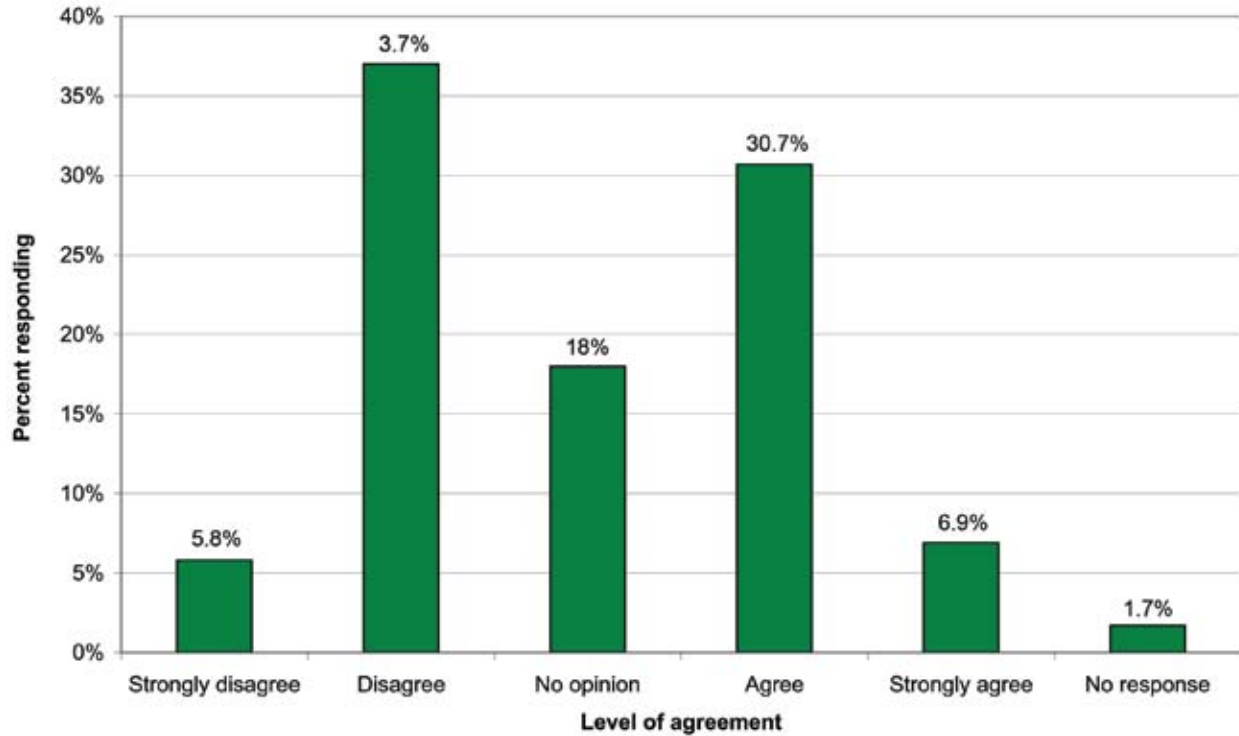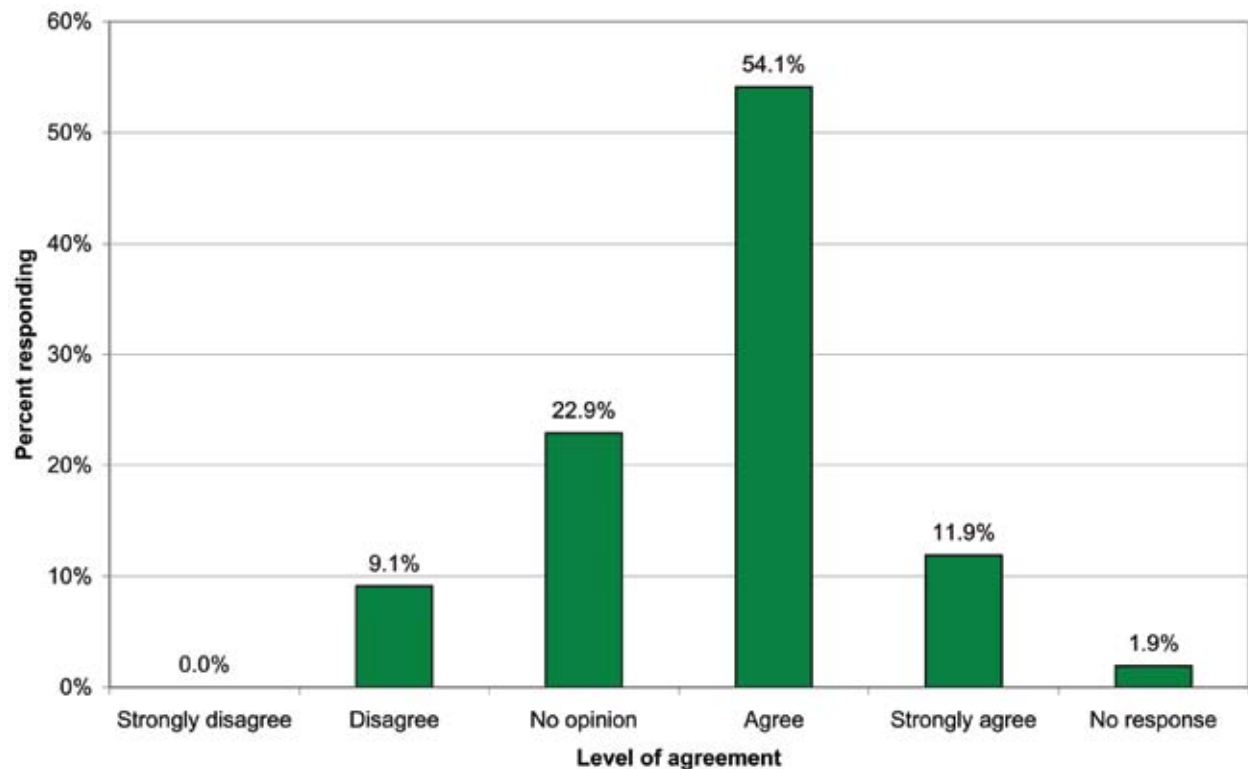

There is adequate information available describing how to determine optimal construction materials and essential trail features.
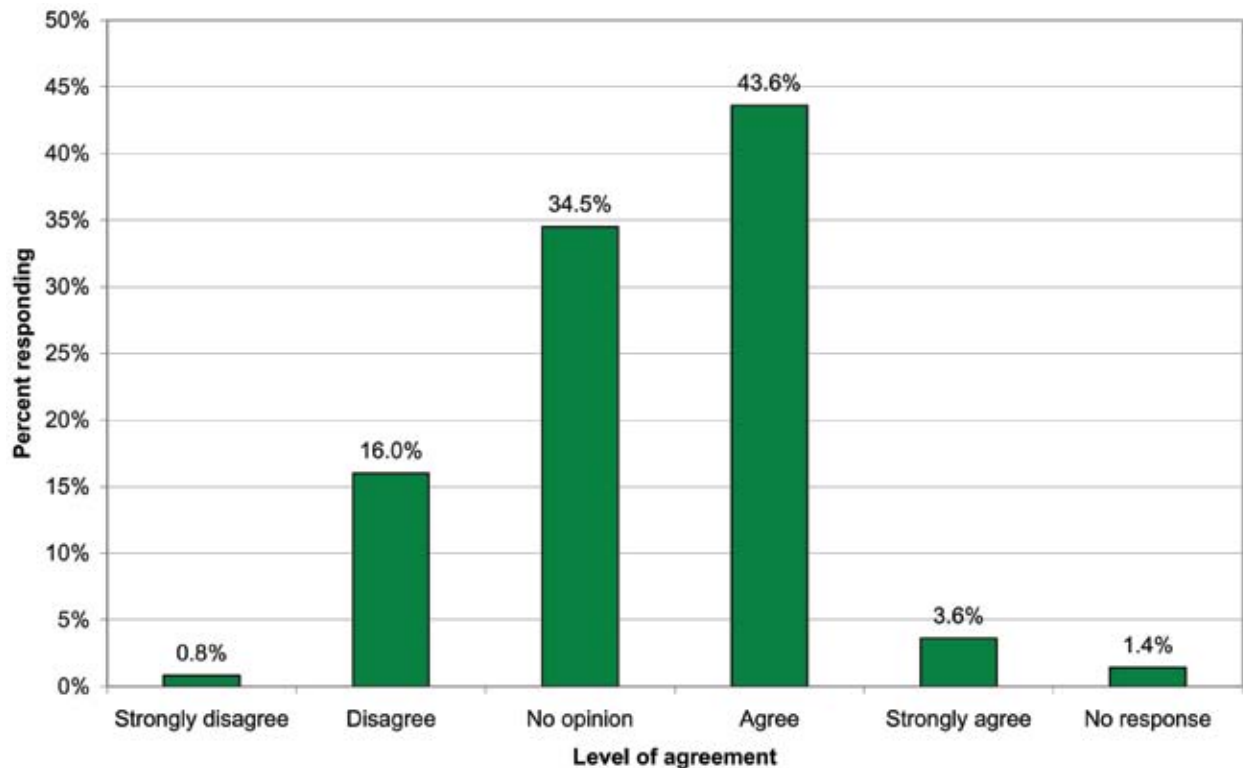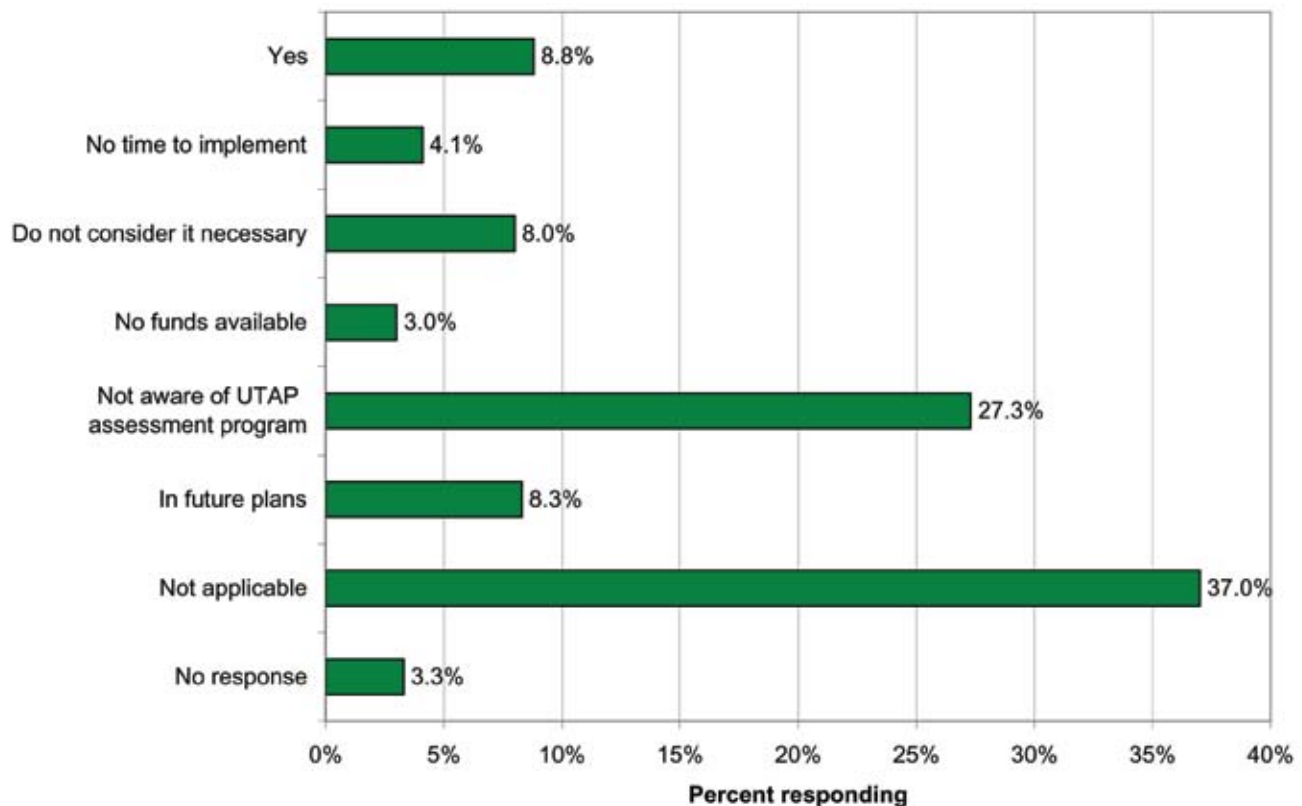
There is a need for research to identify common problems and possible solutions to trail development, planning and maintenance.
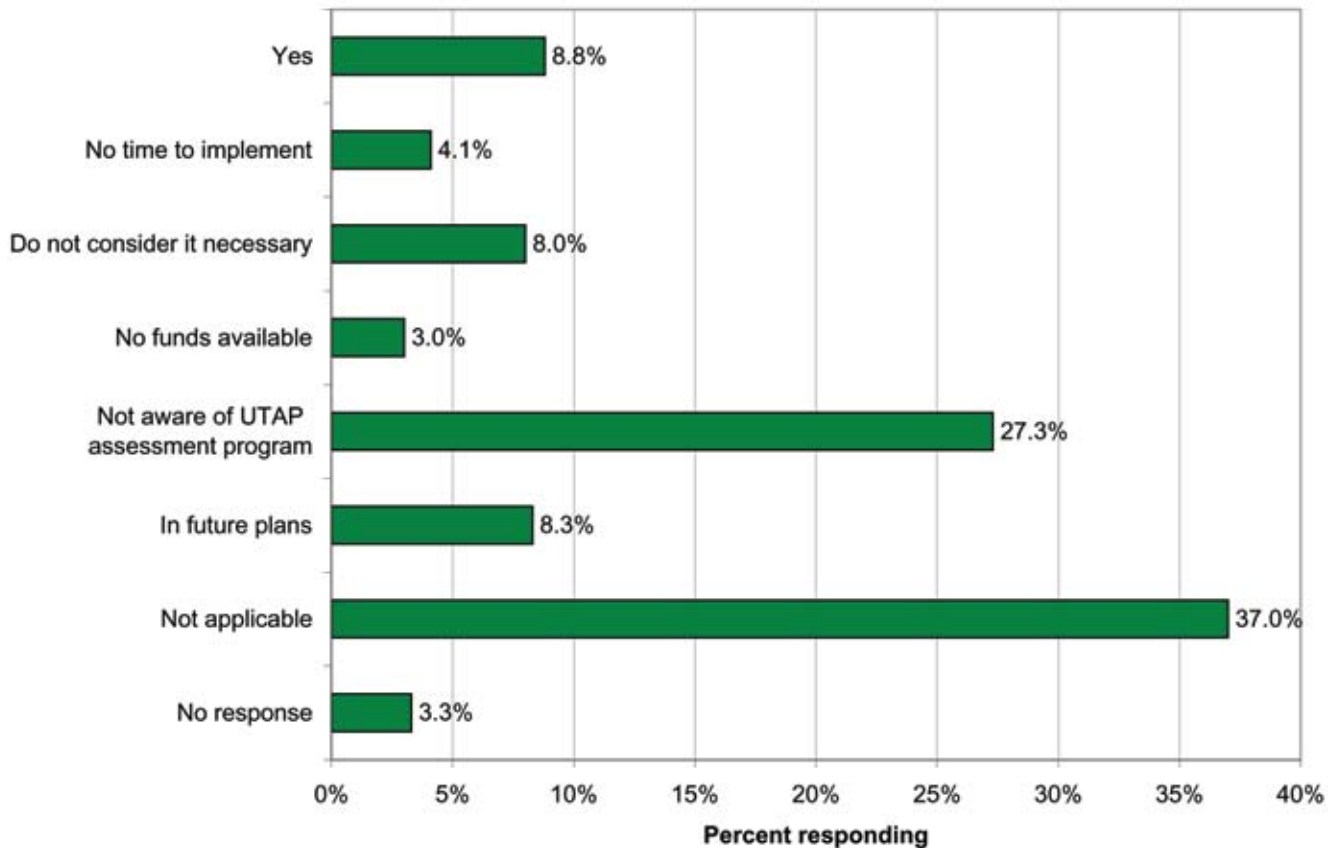

Does your organization use a specific set of guidelines for its day-to-day trail maintenance?

Are you using Universal Trail Assessment Program to evaluate trail difficulty and accessibility?

Response	Percent
Yes	8.8%
No time to implement	4.1%
Do not consider it necessary	8.0%
No funds available	3.0%
Not aware of UTAP assessment program	27.3%
In future plans	8.3%
Not applicable	37.0%
No response	3.3%

Percent responding

ment; the demographic description of trail use; and legislative concerns for trails throughout Indiana.

The survey instrument was the result of issues that emerged from the review of 150 randomly stratified current park and recreation master plans representing small, medium and large populations of cities, counties and townships. Survey instrument questions were developed following extensive study and analysis of these issues by the trails issue committee and staff of the Division of Outdoor Recreation, Streams and Trails Section.

The sample population (n=569) of the study was drawn from staff and management representing several agencies and organizations (e.g., state parks/reservoirs property managers, state forestry property managers, park and recreation superintendents/directors who are IPRA members, park board presidents, APA/IPA members, foundation councils, trail managing entities and commissions) that had trail development/management responsibilities. Each was sent a written survey instrument that was coded to track returned and unreturned instruments. Prior to distribution, the instrument was beta tested for question clarification and content at a Trails Advisory Board meeting during the summer of 2004. Following the beta testing edits, the instrument and a cover letter

explaining the purpose of the study was direct mailed to the sample population by a private research company. Then after one week, a follow-up survey instrument was sent to those who had not returned the initial survey. At the end of the second week, another mailing was made to those who still had not returned their survey. Following the third week, a fourth and final survey instrument was mailed to all outstanding organizations that had not returned the survey.

Twenty-eight surveys were returned as undeliverable or not applicable, thus reducing the sample size to 541. Of the 541 survey instruments, 362 were returned (66.9%), analyzed and reported.

The study focused on some of the administrative/management concerns of trail planning, design and demographics (i.e., number of users, etc.), along with trail information, trail funding, trail legislation and trail multiple use.

TRAIL ISSUES IN INDIANA

Based on trail user and manager survey research, discussions with trail providers and input from trail users, the following trail issues need to be addressed in order to

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provide a comprehensive network of trails that are accessible and available for Hoosier residents.

- Efforts in trail development, planning and design need to be better coordinated at local, state and federal levels.
- Trail opportunities are not considered when making decisions regarding road right-of-way projects, bridge development and expansion projects, and road abandonment.
- Members of the healthcare community are not players in providing trails.
- Landowners, not-for-profits, and businesses are not encouraged to participate in all phases from initiation of the trail's concept to its final completion.
- Trails are not considered in the planning, development and design of public transit systems, nor are public transit systems considered when developing trails.
- Engineers, architects and planners are often not consulted in various phases of the trail development process to ensure natural resource preservation and ADA compliance.

- Trail funds to build and maintain trails do not adequately meet the demand for acquiring, developing and maintaining trails.
- There is a misconception that federal and local mechanisms only fund non-motorized trails in Indiana.
- There is no state funding mechanism to augment annual operating budgets and capital expenditure for acquiring and developing both motorized and non-motorized trails.
- Impact fees are not used consistently for trail funding.
- There are few incentives to use private sources of funding from entities such as foundations and corporations who have interests in trails and the health benefits derived from trail use.
- Current funding restrictions are prohibitive for not-for-profits to acquire and develop trails.
- Current funding mechanisms do not get trails (on the ground) built in a timely fashion.
- Land is becoming unavailable for trail use.
- State legislation does not support the acquisition of former railroad corridors for trail development in a

timely manner.
- Trails are not generally considered or included in land use planning.
- The size and number of areas for the legal operation of ATVs, motorcycles, off-road bicycles, equestrian use and off-highway vehicles is inadequate.
- Current state properties for the legal operation of ATVs, motorcycles, off-road bicycles and off-highway vehicles are understaffed.
- Information on the location and availability of trails is often difficult for the user to find and often does not provide information on trail conditions, level of difficulty or information regarding ADA accessibility.
- There is a distinct lack of research on trails and trail related issues in Indiana.
- Information on the benefits of trail use and the economic benefits of trails in Indiana is lacking and not available to the public.
- The use of educational materials about trail use and environmental ethics/etiquette needs to be developed and promoted.
- Interpretation of the natural, historical and cultural features of trails is not encouraged nor supported.
- Multilingual signage where appropriate to accommodate a more diverse citizenship is not provided.
- There is not general use of standardized signs and symbols to designate trail activities, explain trail conditions and facilitate trail navigation.
- There is no mechanism in place to manage trails on a regional basis.
- A clear picture of the role of the state in acquiring, developing and managing trails in Indiana is lacking.